

ARLINGTON PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING MINTUES

August 11th, 2020

The Town of Arlington Park and Recreation Commission came to order for its online virtual meeting via Zoom on Tuesday August 11th, 2020 at 7:00pm.

Commission Members: Leslie Mayer, Jen Rothenberg, Shirley Canniff, Phil Lasker, Scott Walker, and associate member, Sarah Carrier were present. Recreation Director Joe Connelly and Program Supervisor Zachary Vaillette were also in attendance.

Anticipated Speakers: Ali Carter and Betsy Leondar-Wright

Members of the Public: Karen Grossman, Stephen Bronstein, Alan Jones, David White, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Joy Ahern, Lily Chung, Peter Charig, Richard Piazza, Stephen Bronstein, Susan Stein, Veronika McDonald King, Todd Morse

Preliminary Matter: Leslie Mayer, Park & Recreation Commission Chair, took formal attendance via a roll call. Ms. Mayer read a statement pertaining to Governor Baker's Public Meeting Law change due to COVID-19 regarding virtual meetings. Meeting business ground rules and procedures were also covered by Ms. Mayer.

Open Forum – Public Comment

Ms. Mayer asked if anyone in attendance had public comment. Stephen Bronstein stated that he is an abutter of the Crusher Lot. He recently became aware of the proposal to build a mountain bike park within the property. Mr. Bronstein stated that he has a very young son who frequently plays within the property. He is concerned that safety issues will arise if approved. Mr. Bronstein believes the lot is too small to add biking trails and that if so, there will be a high potential for collisions between bikers and other users. He is requesting that the Mountain Bike Task Force explore if there are other mountain biking parks/trails in the area, which are built within areas of land that are similar in land size, to the Crusher Lot.

Friends of Spy Pond Scavenger Hunt Request – Betsy Leondar-Wright

Ms. Mayer stated that Karen Grossman was present to speak on the behalf of Betsy Leondar-Wright. This was in regards to the Friends of Spy Pond Park Scavenger Hunt request. Ms. Grossman spoke on the request and stated that the scavenger hunt would feature laminated clues around the property. Participants would pick up and read these clues (related to the history of Spy Pond), and would then search for the prizes. Art supply themed prizes would be located within Tupperware containers around the property, which participants could pick a prize from. Ms. Grossman stated that this would not be just a single time event, but would be ongoing. The Friends of Spy Pond Park Group envision local families visiting the park anytime through the month of September to take part in this scavenger hunt. The group does not believe there will be a specific day/time where a large group will gather for this, as this is ongoing.

Mr. Connelly stated due to the current situation, the Arlington Board of Health (BOH) would be looking for the clue to be larger, so that they can be read at a distance rather than individuals picking them up. Ms. Grossman stated that she is unsure of what could be used as an alternative. Ms. Mayer stated that since this is not being planned as a single time event, there is no true way to know how many people will participate and when. This is especially true in the time of social media. Ms. Mayer believes that it may not work this year due to the current circumstances.

Ms. Grossman stated that when Ms. Leondar-Wright spoke with the BOH regarding this request, they suggested the possibility of using QR codes. Ms. Grossman asked if the clue signs were made large enough to read without being touched or used QR Codes, would this be promising for approval of the request. Ms. Mayer stated that this is only a suggestion. Their request is being discussed and no decision has been made yet regarding approval. The BOH wants to limit interactions, especially with individuals taking prizes from the prize box. Ms. Rothenberg stated that if they are able to remove the prize boxes from this request, approval might be much more obtainable. This would eliminate any physical contact. Ms. Rothenberg stated that the current proposal sounds like geocaching,

which the Commission currently allows. She believes that the group is just looking for ways to get individuals to the park/learn about the property. She stated that this request may have started off on the wrong foot.

Ms. Canniff likes the idea, but believes approval of this specific request could lead to issues, as the Commission is not currently allowing/approving other special permit requests. Ms. Rothenberg agreed that the Commission needs to be consistent with their policies, but believes this is not an event but more of an art installation. She does not anticipate that many people will be there at the same time to take part in this scavenger hunt. However, Ms. Carrier stated that she does see how they could have a large number of individuals when the activity starts on the first day of September. She also stated people will be using the park regardless.

Mr. Walker loves the idea and asked if it was thought of before COVID-19. Ms. Mayer stated that it was not and it was developed as a replacement to the group's annual celebration. Mr. Walker believes if this is to occur, then they should move forward with using QR codes to access the clues. From his perspective, the prize aspect should be removed. Mr. Lasker stated he had no comment on this request.

Ms. Grossman stated the focus of the activity is to learn about the "history and mystery" of the park. It is intended to be for all ages, including teenagers and adults. She added that this idea was developed based on the geocaching. Ms. Grossman noted that she believes there are already items hidden within the park. Ms. Grossman asked if anyone knew how to make QR codes and how easier they are to create. Ms. Carrier stated with the group already having a website, this can serve as their platform and the codes should not be too difficult to create.

Ms. Rothenberg thinks the Commission should move forward with approval as this would be a nice activity to the community, especially teenagers. Mr. Connelly requested that in the event a motion is made, he wants included that this plan must also be approved by the BOH before moving forward. Ms. Rothenberg stated that the proposal should be revamped based on this feedback before a motion is made. Ms. Grossman made note that the BOH suggested the QR codes, but did not say anything regarding the prize boxes. Ms. Mayer stated that the Commission is stating that they do not want prize boxes used for this activity. Mr. Connelly stated that their planned start date is approaching quickly and their timeline would need to be adjusted in order to promote the event properly. Ms. Rothenberg suggested that The Friends of Spy Pong Group reach out to a high school or middle school aged student to help with the setup of the QR Codes. Ms. Mayer stated that they will not be moving forward with a motion or vote during this current meeting. This request will be brought to the Commission again when once it has been amended. Ms. Grossman requested that Mr. Connelly works with the group and the BOH on this request. Ms. Grossman thanked the Commission for their kind consideration.

Business in Parks Program Review – Ali Carter

Ali Carter was in attendance to review how the Business in the Parks Program is going. Ms. Carter stated that from her perspective, this has been a huge success so far. From her information, there are currently (15) different businesses taking part in this program, which include art and fitness related businesses. Ms. Carter believes that this program was set up well, in coordination with the Commission and BOH.

Mr. Connelly also believes that the Business in the Parks Program has been running smoothly. Businesses are going through the required process and submitting requests. They have been easy to work with and have been following the required policies & procedures when on site. Mr. Connelly stated that he believes that the businesses going through the process are even policing individuals/other groups who are not. He believes that the instances of "rogue" groups showing up have been declining.

Ms. Rothenberg stated that her previous concerns were in relation to businesses not going through the required process. She asked if all the permitted businesses were based in Arlington, as she did not recognize some of their names. Ms. Carter stated that all businesses that have been approved have locations in Arlington. Ms. Mayer asked if any Commissioners had any feedback to add. No comment from Commissioners at this time.

Ms. Mayer thanked Ms. Carter for her time. Ms. Mayer believes this program has gone very well so far. Ms. Carter stated that she would continue to communicate with Mr. Connelly through the remainder of the process. Ms. Carter thanked the Commission for allowing this program and for all their support.

Afterschool Programs, Day Cares, Preschool Programs, Arlington Public School Park Use Requests

Mr. Connelly stated that Todd Morse, Director of the Arlington After-School Programs, was present on the call. Mr. Morse had previously reached out to Recreation regarding the possible scheduled usage of Town park/playground for the school department sponsored after-school programs which he oversees.

Mr. Morse shared that he has been communicating with representatives from the several different afterschool programs which operate within Arlington Public School buildings. Mr. Morse stated that he is requesting for permission to place tents at several parks which are overseen by Recreation. At these locations, his programs would have designated times to use specific areas including playgrounds. Mr. Connelly confirmed that he is requesting a field permit so that his programs can have sole use of a specific park features during a designated time blocks. Mr. Morse confirmed this was correct.

Ms. Rothenberg wanted Mr. Morse to confirm if they were looking to request field space or playground space. Mr. Morse stated both. Requests will vary by location based off of what field space and amenities are available. An example of this would be Thompson, where he would be looking to request the use the new playground and a corner of the field during a specific timeframe. At Brackett, they would be looking for more space, as two programs run out of this location. Ideally they would have one group using the field space and while the other group is using the playground.

Mr. Morse stated that he does not have the specifics on all of the requests yet, but wanted to feel out the Commission before moving forward with detailed plans for each location. Mr. Connelly stated that the timeframe which Mr. Morse's afterschool program is looking for access, M-F from 2:30-4:00pm, could have conflicts. Other groups in Town may be permitted to use specific fields during time including high school sports. No decisions regarding fall high school sports have been made by the MIAA at this time.

Mr. Connelly received an email from Jim Feeney regarding the request to place semi-permanent tents on Town maintained fields. He stated that placement would limit the amount of usable space. Playing field dimensions and the layout of irrigation systems would need to be taken into account. Mr. Connelly stated that this request is a possibility, but details may vary location to location depending on these factors. Ms. Mayer stated that some of the properties being discussed are school department maintained properties and not Town maintained properties. Mr. Connelly stated with Mr. Morse's after-school programs being run through the school system, requests and approval would only be needed for the Town properties/playgrounds. Mr. Morse confirmed and stated that he is only referring to Town properties like playing fields and play structures, like the one at Thompson. Ms. Mayer asked for Commissioners to share their feedback.

Ms. Canniff stated that she will be excluding herself from this discussion and all matters related to this topic due to her personal interests. She requested that this be noted within the meeting minutes.

With the currently limit for public gathering being (50), Mr. Lasker asked if the requested playgrounds would be off limits to the general public during the specific timeframes. Mr. Connelly stated that this is correct. Permits would be issued for sole use during these timeframes.

Ms. Rothenberg asked what time these after-school programs would operate to daily. Mr. Morse stated that programs will most likely be going to 5:30pm daily, M-F. Ms. Rothenberg believes that this request is possible, especially the field portion of the request. Ms. Rothenberg is concerned about the playground portion of the request. Playgrounds are used by children and families at the time of school dismissal daily and probably more than ever. Ms. Rothenberg suggested the possibility of only issuing permits after 4:00pm for the play structures. She believes there needs to be available time for public usage, since afterschool programs are so specific to only the individuals registered.

Mr. Morse continued to share information on his proposed plan and stated ideally, they would have several groups within the afterschool program. Groups would be on a rotating schedule and each would have a specific time to use the playground. Mr. Morse is looking for as much outside time as possible which will help keep kids active and moving. Mr. Connelly stated he wanted to make a suggestion, as this was just the beginning of the discussion and no motion to vote would be made during this meeting Mr. Connelly stated that it may be a good idea to put together specific requests for each location. Mr. Connelly could then reach out to the DPW and Athletic Director, as the information they provide regarding field usage will impact if/how these fields' permits would be approved. Mr. Morse stated that he will put together proposals for each location. Ms. Mayer believes that this is a good idea and is somewhat similar to what is occurring with the Business in Parks program as there are specific approved times and locations.

Ms. Mayer stated that she would find it concerning in the event that the public was not allowed to use one of the (3) public playgrounds at Thompson. Allowing access to the public for playgrounds for a designated time after-school should be included. This information will help moving forward. Ms. Rothenberg suggested with the concerns of setting up tents in fields (vandalism), it may be a good idea to look into areas closer to the physical school buildings. This will allow for the tents to be more protected for the elements, within the range of security cameras, and can be used for additional activities like arts & crafts. Mr. Connelly wants to tackle this topic from a uniform perspective. He believes that additional requests similar to Mr. Morse's will be received from other after-school & preschool programs in Town. Mr. Morse will be preparing this information and following up with Mr. Connelly. He thanked the Commission for their time.

Correspondence Received

N/A

Capital Project Updates

a) *Lussiano Playground*

Mr. Connelly stated that this playground project is moving along. The rubber surfacing is scheduled to be installed next week. Mr. Connelly stated that this first time personally working with JAM Corporation. He believes that have been doing an excellent job so far and stated that the firm has been very responsive with the change orders needed. A construction meeting for this project will be occurring next week to discuss cement slabs.

b) *Rink Refrigeration & Snow Melt Pit*

Mr. Connelly noted that the now needed handrail for the new ramp located at the front entrance has been ordered. He also stated that several parts needed for the new snow melt pit are on backorder and should be delivered in the coming weeks.

c) *FY 22 Capital and ADA Upgrade Discussion*

Mr. Connelly state that he is still waiting for Prescription Turf Services to review the maintenance plan for the field at Robbins Farm.

Mr. Connelly recently asked for all Commission Members to separately email him what their top choices/proprieties would be for capital projects that Recreation should complete next. Mr. Connelly stated that he is still waiting for the feedback of some Commissioners, but the priorities have been along the same lines so far. He stated that it will be important for the Commissioners to discuss how they will use their feasibility study funding, which will help with decision making moving forward. Ms. Mayer stated the Commission should be very clear in the scope of work on what is needed/what they are looking for when cost estimates are being determined for projects.

Task Group Updates

a) *Town Wide Playground*

The next meeting for the Town Wide Playground Task Group will occur on Friday, August 21st.

b) Reservoir Playground

The Reservoir Playground Task Group is moving along and working off the information provided by KZLA.

c) Mountain Biking – Organization of Working Groups

The Mountain Biking Task Group will be meeting tomorrow. Ms. Rothenberg suggested with coming up with a better name for the group, as some members of the community are confused and believe the proposal is to turn the entire property at Crusher Lot into a biking park. Ms. Mayer then asked if this task group is strictly looking at the Crusher Lot property or if other locations within Town are being considered for this proposal. Mr. Connelly stated that they are considering all options for mountain biking trails in Arlington. This group is not looking to create a fully dedicated mountain biking terrain park at any location.

Summer Programming Updates

Mr. Vaillette gave an update on the department's summer programming. The Summer on Summer Street program is currently in its third week and has been running very smoothly. Participants have been very good about wearing their masks and following all the required protocols in relation to COVID-19. This program will be running for one more week and has featured (40) campers per week.

Mr. Vaillette reported that over 3,000 individuals have visited the Thompson Spray Park this summer. Recreation is staffing the facility and has been keeping track of attendance daily.

It was also noted the Greg Carter Hockey Camp will be renting the Ed Burns Arena for the next two weeks to offer their program. This is a rental and the program is not associated with the department. Recreation's additional summer offerings will include the Arlington Recreations Summer Hockey Program the week of August 24th, and soccer and flag football programs through Viking Sports.

Approval of Minutes – July 14, 2020 & July 28th, 2020

Ms. Mayer brought up approval of meeting minutes for the Commission's Meetings on July 14th and July 28th. It was noted that Ms. Mayer has previously sent Mr. Vaillette several edits for both meeting minutes. Commissioners noted edits including the following:

July 28th Meeting Minutes

- Page 2: Comments for Ms. Canniff is listed twice. The 2nd batch of comments was from Ms. Mayer, and not Ms. Canniff. Name change needed.
- Page 4: Under the Robbins Farm Bench Gifting Approval Section, include "The wording of this plaque must follow wording per PRC policy".

Commissioners had additional amendments in addition to these, most grammatical. To streamline the process, Ms. Mayer asked all Commissioners to send their edits/amendments to Mr. Vaillette. Ms. Canniff then made the motion to approve the Park and Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes for July 14th and July 28th pending the Commissioner's amendments. Ms. Rothenberg seconded this motion. Ms. Mayer asked for a roll call which all (5) Commissioners responded yes to, approving the minutes as amended (5-0).

Comments and Items for Future Meetings

The next Commission Meeting will take place on August 25th via Zoom. Discussion topics for this meeting and future meetings include:

- a) Wellington Project Review – Emily Sullivan

Mr. Lasker suggested that Commissioners conduct a walk through at the Reservoir property to put the current possible designs into perspective.

Ms. Rothenberg stated that she does not want decisions on the Reservoir project to be made too fast. She believes that the Commission needs to have a general discussion regarding the Reservoir operation moving forward which includes discussing the concession stand. Mr. Connelly stated that not only does the concession stand bring in revenue, but allows the department to provide young people with jobs. He also likes the idea of food trucks and agrees there needs to be more of an operational discussion on how they will operate moving forward.

Mr. Connelly stated with a new boat ramp, this provides an opportunity to expand rentals with kayaks, stand up paddleboards, etc. Ms. Rothenberg noted that they should increase the number of trash receptacles at the Reservoir. Mr. Connelly stated they should look into new alternatives for trash receptacles. This discussion should include the type of receptacles (visually pleasing, easy to maintain, long lasting, etc.) and locations of placement (how many, high traffic areas, etc.).

Mr. Walker motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:44pm. This motion was seconded by Mr. Lasker. Motion to adjourn the meeting was approved by Commissioners, 5-0, at 8:25pm.

The Arlington Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes were respectfully submitted by Program Supervisor, Zachary Vaillette.